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EULOGY

ON THE CHARACTER OF THE LATE

GEN. GEORGE WASHINGTON:

THE PRIDE OF AMERICA; THE GLORY OF
THE WORLD.

PRONOUNCED BEFORE THE INHABITANTS

OF THE

TOWN OF BROOKFIELD,

ON SATURDAY THE 22d OF FEBRUARY, 1800.

By PLINY MERRICK, Esq.

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Printed at the request of said Town expressed in their VOTE.

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BIOLOGY

OF THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

GEORGE A. SMITH

THE BUREAU OF AMERICAN ETHNOLOGY
WASHINGTON

RECORDED IN THE DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR



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AN

EULOGY.

MY FELLOW TOWNSMEN,

THIS day is devoted to the commemoration
of the political Saviour of our country.

On this day, annually, have the brave sons and
the fair daughters of America been accustomed to
assemble in festive mirth, to celebrate the nativ-
ity of GENERAL WASHINGTON.

“ And now our fate we must deplore,

“ Columbia’s Saviour is no more !”

Our music, which used to be mirth, is turned
into mourning. Tears are mingled with our joys.

In this temple, dedicated to the honor and wor-
ship of the God of Heaven, we now assemble

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to pay our tribute of respect to an illustrious fellow mortal. We would not profane these sacred walls—we come to commemorate the worth of virtue, and to show our love of it. We assemble in grateful homage to adore and bless the Supreme Creator of all, who hath raised up for us an horn of temporal salvation.

In a Republican Government, it would be degrading the dignity of man, to boast of the high and exalted ancestors from whom he descends. Royalty and nobility are the baubles of monarchy. It is enough that the man himself possessed the noble virtues which adorn and embellish the human character. Yet if any one would be pleased in knowing the parentage of this, his so deeply lamented father, he may easily find by a perusal of the best of authorities that he sprang from a very ancient and respectable family in the greatest state in our Union.—To tell you, by oral tradition, of predictions made at his birth of future glory, would appear like fable or fancy. We need not fancy,

fable or prophecy, to impress on our minds the ideas of his excellence. A plain narration of his life is an Eulogy on human nature ! You will not expect, on this occasion, even an attempt in your speaker to delineate the character, or express the worth of the unrivalled virtues of the man you honor, and whose loss you so feelingly lament. The goodness and greatness of WASHINGTON cannot, by the most brilliant tongue of eloquence, be expressed in an hour, a day, or a year. Could you take but the slightest view of the transcendent brightness of his career in life, how would patriots and philosophers, soldiers and saints be charmed with the prospect ! Volume after volume shall swell to contain a history of his matchless deeds.

Would you be informed when and where he was born ? When and where he died ? Or would you be told of the good and the great things he did while a resident on earth—the counsel he gave—the battles he fought—the wisdom of the one, or the valor of the other ? You have the relation in

your hands, in histories, orations, eulogies, and the crowded publications of the day. Would you, my friends, have your feelings warmed to an enthusiastic ardor by a representation of his commanding presence of mind, calm and cool recollection, and the animating courage, which, like an electric fluid in the tremendous day of battle, darted from his eye through all his troops and forced them to acts of heroism and victory? Hear it not from me—hear it from the brave of your own town and country, who stood by him in those scenes and saw glory shine around him! No pen, in its description, can warm the heart equal to the simple story of the soldier who saw and supported him. I have not to inform you that in his youthful days, honor perched on his head at Monongahela—that he was the Father who gave us a name among the nations of the earth—that he saved our Capital by his wisdom—that at times, (weak and weakened as we were) he stood almost our solitary bulwark and defence. The glorious morning at Trenton, after the horrors of a dismal night in which the tempestuous discords of nature yielded to the calmness

of WASHINGTON, can never be forgotten. I need not tell you with what diffidence he entered as a guide into the public scenes, both of war and of peace—and with what eclat he retired from them—of his wisdom and address in collecting and keeping together his forces; and how he surpassed that, in the disbanding of them—how in one place he eluded the designs of the enemy by his foresight, and how in another he leaped the bounds of human conjecture by his warlike achievements in putting to flight a haughty foe, who then viewed him as Goliath did “*the stripling of Israel!*”

Compare him with those who stand the highest on the list of fame—whose names are continually founded and refounded by every tongue: By whom, and in what hath he been surpassed? Will you talk of the valliant men of old—those heroes, warriors, and conquerors who have driven assunder the nations, and put to flight Liberty itself? Where is the name that does not, at the pointing of the finger, like a sensitive plant, elude the ap-

proach, and wither and wilt—wilt and wither in the presence of WASHINGTON!

Will you ask me to compare him with those in modern times, in foreign countries—the vaunting pretended patriots, philosophers, and the bold intrepid defenders of the rights of men? With those, who by their diplomatic skill, intrigue, or prowess, under the specious name of liberty, have spread discord and desolation through a convulsed world?—who turn religion into ridicule and swim to glory in seas of blood? Forbid it humanity! O thou exalted spirit, pardon a suggestion of a comparison of this kind.

Shall I rehearse to you the heart-feeling addresses which our beloved WASHINGTON made on his entrance into the martial and civil departments and the more endearing and instructive ones when he left them? My knowledge of your virtue and patriotism convince me that it is unnecessary—you have them in your houses, deposited with your Bibles and recorded on your hearts. But as well

might one describe to you the appearance of the ocean by a drop from the bucket, as he could display the character of our lamented Chief, by a representation of a particular instance of his valor or virtue. It was in the assemblage of a vast variety of talents and virtues in our revered Sage that rendered him the Chief among ten thousand ! But oh ! Our Chief is gone !

“ The Patriot’s dead ! A nation weeps !

“ In dust Columbia’s Guardian sleeps !

Who is there but will say, when I heard this “ my lips quivered ?” The tents of Columbia like those of Cushman, were in affliction, and the curtains of America, like those of Midia, did tremble. O Earth, hadst thou sensation, I would hate thee, that thou didst not groan when thy dust covered the glory of the land. I would have said, “ Ye mountains of Gilboa”—ye mountains of Vernon —“let there be no dew, nor let the rain fall upon you !” Ye daughters of Columbia weep—weep over the tomb of our illustrious Sage ! “ How are

the mighty fallen, and the weapons of war perished!"

But we have, my friends, to console ourselves in this, though the beauty of our country is fallen yet our hope is not departed: He has purchased freedom and independence, and they descend to his heirs, who are worthy of the Inheritance. What father could aspire to fairer prospects in his children? Is there a people on earth by whom industry is more cultivated, science fostered, liberty cherished, or piety revered? Shall we tamely submit to an inferiority in a comparison with other nations because our Patron is retired? No, even this Commonwealth would, and ought to rise indignant at the idea. We have those now at home, in our councils and courts, whose integrity and ability give us a fair claim to a preference. But our claim as the fit heirs of WASHINGTON stops not here—where, in what country or kingdom are the principles of patriotism so pure and refined as in the Congress of the United States? And we may hazard a challenge to the powers of the world to

produce a man so worthy of the place of the lamented guardian of Columbia, as our *illustrious* ADAMS!

But still we repeat, still will we delight to echo, and re-echo the praises of our departed Friend.

Could his glory in the field be rivalled, he himself has done it in his unexampled mode of retirement from war—in his boundless wisdom in peace—in the formation of a republican constitution—standing the Chief in the civil as he did in the military department—and in the display he has given to the world that liberty may delight to dwell on earth. Could another pearl be added to those which he had reluctantly received from an admiring world—see him in *retirement*—his darling element beautified with the less brilliant, but the more valuable gems of piety, humanity, courtesy and kindness, and all those social and domestic affections which endear man to man, and consummate the perfection of human felicity.

He died as he lived—calm and serene, modest, humane, generous and public spirited ! In his last will and testament he bequeathed freedom to the slave—food and raiment to the needy—rewards to the faithful—tokens of friendship to the friend—funds for the education of orphans—and an handsome foundation towards the endowment of an University for the laudable purposes by him expressed. His *swords*, he gave them to the *brave* “with an injunction not to unsheath them for the purpose of shedding blood, except it be for self defence, or in defence of their country and it’s rights ; and in the latter case to keep them unsheathed, and prefer falling with them in their hands to the relinquishment thereof.”

And, now, once more, he asks for retirement : He requests, in his will, to be entombed with his relations at Mount Vernon ;—“And it is my express desire,” he says, “that my corpse may be interred in a private manner, without parade, or funeral oration.”—And could not thy country grant

thee this? Would they not permit thee to have thy wished for retirement in the peaceful shades—or even in the *dust* of Vernon? No—thy body is requested of thy amiable and disconsolate widow—and she “*Taught by the great example which she so long had before her never to oppose private wishes to the public will*” consents to the request.

Long may the name of our ancestor be revered! Long may the name of WASHINGTON sound harmonious in the ears of posterity! Monuments of marble are erected in all our land to perpetuate his memory! The father shall tell to his children, and they to theirs the things he has done for us “till time shall be no more!” The finest gold shall be tarnished—the diamond shall be darkened—marble shall moulder—virtue and patriotism desert the bosom of man, ere his name shall fade on earth. The glory, and the love of him shall here abide so long as the sun and the moon endure—and then, we have reason to believe, his praise shall remain in realms of bliss, founded by

angels and good men made perfect, where there is
no Sun to give light by day or Moon by night,
but GOD HIMSELF is the light and the glory
thereof.

THE END.

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